

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 HA-05 AID-05

CCO-00 FBOE-00 OC-06 OPR-02 USSS-00 CA-01 A-01

SCS-06 OMB-01 SY-05 IO-13 /112 W

-----093469 181224Z /16

O R 181120Z FEB 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6854

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 341

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0917

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS MILI LE SY

SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION REPORT, FEBRUARY 18, 1300 HOURS LOCAL

1. SECURITY SITUATION.

A. A BOMB EXPLODED AT ABOUT 2000 HOURS ON FEBRUARY 17

IN A SMALL HOUSE NEXT TO THE EL GHAWI BUILDING (WHERE TWO

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EMBASSY EMPLOYEES LIVE), ABOUT 1500 METERS FROM THE

EMBASSY NEAR THE COAST ROAD IN WEST BEIRUT. THE BOMB

CAUSED MATERIAL DAMAGE BUT NO INJURIES. THE EXPLOSION

BROKE THE BEDROOM WINDOWS IN ONE OF THE APARTMENTS

INHABITED BY AN EMBASSY EMPLOYEE. WE DO NOT KNOW THE

MOTIVE FOR THE BOMBING, BUT THERE IS A PSP OFFICE IN

THE VICINITY, AND INTER-DRUZE RIVALRIES COULD HAVE

BEEN RESPONSIBLE.

B. THE EAST BEIRUT AREA REMAINS QUIET. IN FURN ASH-SHUBBAK TRAFFIC IS NORMAL AND SHOPS ARE OPEN. THE HAZMIYAH AND HADATH AREAS ARE CALM, ALTHOUGH THE MAIN DAMASCUS ROAD IN FRONT OF FAYYADIYAH BARRACKS REMAINS CLOSED.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR ON FEBRUARY 17 THAT THE SITUATION WAS STILL CRITICAL BECAUSE THE PHALANGE PARTY HAD SO FAR REFUSED TO COOPERATE IN TURNING OVER SUSPECTS IN THE FURN ASH-SHUBBAK INCIDENT TO THE AUTHORITIES. PARTY LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL TOLD AMBASSADOR SAME DAY THAT PHALANGE WAS PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH THE AUTHORITIES, BUT WAS UNABLE ITSELF TO ARREST THE SUSPECTS.

3. FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN PUBLICLY DENIED FEBRUARY 17 THAT THE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY HAD ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE WHICH, INTER ALIA, ACCUSED THE SYRIANS OF CONCENTRATING 18,000 MEN AND 220 TANKS AROUND EAST BEIRUT. (CHAMOUN ACKNOWLEDGED PRIVATELY TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE NLP'S INFORMATION ABOUT MASSIVE SYRIAN TROOP MOVEMENTS WAS INCORRECT). THIS STORY, WHICH WAS ORIGINATED BY REUTERS, WAS REPLAYED ON RADIO MONTE CARLO, RADIO ISRAEL, AND RIGHTIST LE REVEIL, CAUSING VIRTUAL PANIC AMONG MANY CHRISTIANS IN EAST BEIRUT. CONFIDENTIAL

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4. THE MEMBERS OF THE LEBANESE-ADY INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION TOOK THEIR OATH OF OFFICE ON FEBRUARY 17 AND WILL OFFICIALLY LAUNCH THEIR INQUIRY INTO THE FAYYADIYAH CLASH ON FEBRUARY 20. (THE COMMISSION WHICH INCLUDES THREE LEBANESE AND TWO SYRIAN OFFICERS IS HEADED BY A SYRIAN. PRESIDENT SARKIS, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE SYRIANS, APPOINTED THE LEBANESE AND SYRIAN MEMBERS ON FEBRUARY 16.) ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS, PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS HAVE STARTED AND MOST OF THE OFFICERS INVOLVED IN THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENT HAVE ALREADY BEEN QUESTIONED. THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION'S REPORT WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE SPECIAL SECURITY COURT, WHICH CONSISTS OF TWO LEBANESE AND THREE SYRIANS. PARKER

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